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SOVIET MILITARY POSTURE AND
POLICIES IN THE THIRD WORLD

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SOVIET MILITARY POSTURE AND POLICIES IN THE THIRD WORLD

PRÉCIS

The USSR has long regarded various parts of the Third World as important in the competition with its major rivals, the US and China. As their policy has increasingly assumed a global scope, the Soviets have become more deeply involved in many areas of the Third World. The USSR's political objectives in the Third World and its military deployments in distant areas have become closely linked and mutually supporting; their military presence helps the Soviets to gain influence and this influence helps them to expand their deployments.

- Time and experience, with mixed successes and frustrations, have made the Soviets more aware of the diversity of the Third World. They have come to realize that a uniform policy toward the Third World as a whole is neither feasible nor productive. Their approach now is differentiated country by country.
- The last few years have seen a gradual but significant change in rivalry between the US and USSR in the Third World. This change is due to awareness on the part of both powers of limitations on their ability to influence developments in Third World countries, and greater skepticism about whether, in some cases, the objective would be worth the cost. It also involves constraints im-

posed on the USSR by economic and military priorities and domestic politics. It further reflects a new dimension in international affairs created by sharpening competition for natural resources. And it has undoubtedly also been due to the fact that Moscow has been devoting greater attention and energy to issues affecting its posture toward the West and China.¹

These changes have not led Moscow to alter its basic methods of operation, but they do introduce new complexities in the Third World environment and in Soviet calculations about it. Although the Soviets seek to expand their presence and influence, their approach has become more selective than it was a few years ago.

- Where local situations create opportunities for Moscow to deploy forces with limited risk in support of political objectives, or to extend aid in return for the use of facilities, it continues to do so.
- The Soviets continue to regard military aid as the single most useful instrument for gaining influence in the Third World and, in some cases, for gaining access to facilities for support of naval and air operations. Aid levels vary in response to available opportunities and the changing needs and absorptive capacity of the recipients. But they have often fallen short of recipients' desires.
- The Soviets have become a major influence in the Middle East; they have attempted to offset the setback they suffered in Egypt in mid-1972 by augmenting their military aid and presence in Syria and Iraq. They also have been very active in Somalia, Yemen (Aden), and Guinea. And they have a strong position in India. In other areas, the Soviet military presence has not grown significantly in size or scope.

Soviet military forces now deployed in Third World areas chiefly serve a political-military function in situations short of a major war. The Soviets have not developed, nor are they developing on a high priority basis, the kinds of forces necessary to intervene militarily in Third World countries on a large scale or against significant opposition.

¹ There is disagreement within the Intelligence Community as to how significant this factor is in terms of Soviet behavior in the Third World. The question is more fully discussed in paragraph 20 of the text.

There will, nonetheless, be a gradual growth in the USSR's capabilities for deploying forces in the Third World over the next few years.

- The forces they have presently deployed are suitable for rendering assistance to Third World countries in certain kinds of conflicts. In some circumstances they could serve as a deterrent to Western intervention, and they are also capable of engaging in gunboat diplomacy, intelligence collection, protection of Soviet merchant, oceanographic and fishing vessels, and personnel evacuation.
- Certain Soviet forces can be deployed overseas to augment the Soviet military presence in the Third World, depending on many variables. The navy generally is the most flexible and ready of these forces. The Soviets could increase considerably the number of naval combatants deployed in certain areas, and they have under construction newer classes of ships, including an aircraft carrier, which could perform a variety of tasks in Third World areas.
- As they continue to expand their air and sea transport, and improve their tactical air, air defense, and naval forces, they will be better equipped to deploy combatant forces in certain distant areas and to support them. The Soviets would have little difficulty in moving air defense equipment and systems to most Third World areas.

Future Soviet opportunities will be greatest in those countries which feel threatened by regional adversaries, especially when the latter are friends and allies of the US or China. The Soviets will encounter obstacles as well as opportunities. They will, in particular, frequently face the problem of reconciling their global interests with the parochial interests of Third World clients. They will be vulnerable to further reverses of the kind suffered earlier in Indonesia, Sudan, and Egypt.

It is of limited predictive use to categorize possible targets of Soviet interest in order of relative importance. In general, however, the Middle East and South Asia remain areas of particularly high priority.

- In the Middle East, the Soviets will be anxious to avoid direct collision with the US, but they now consider they have important interests of their own to protect, and expect to have a voice in

decisions affecting the area. In a crisis situation, Moscow's behavior would be affected by its assessment of US readiness to act in the particular situation.

- The Soviets must recognize that radicalism will probably gain ground in the Persian Gulf area and they will hope to exploit it. Yet any Soviet push in the Gulf which threatened Western access to oil would carry a high price for Soviet relations with the US, other industrialized states, and the larger regional powers. This consideration is likely to inhibit a conspicuous enlargement of the Soviet *military* presence in the Gulf.²
- The Indian Ocean is likely to see some growth in the Soviet naval presence; the extent of the increase will depend on developments in the area and on strategic calculations, including whether the US presence there grows and the course of Soviet-Chinese relations.
- In the Caribbean, the Soviet military presence is likely to continue to increase gradually, but the Soviets would almost certainly test US reactions before increasing this presence substantially. Elsewhere in Latin America, the outlook is for some increase in military supply relationships and in naval visits.
- Africa on the whole will remain low on the Soviet scale of priorities.
- It is unlikely that the USSR will be prepared to enter formal agreements with the US affecting regional arms control.

Moscow will continue to exercise some care about encroaching on US interests in the Third World. The Soviets will, of course, not necessarily see those interests in the same light as the US does, and, in pursuing immediate advantages, they could miscalculate the risks. If they were to come to believe that the global balance had definitely shifted in their favor, they might grow bolder in the use of their forces. But, unless they are convinced that this has happened, a mixture of prudence and opportunism is likely to characterize their course.

² The views of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, are set forth in his footnote to paragraph 44.

FOREWORD

This Estimate examines Soviet military posture and policies in the Third World and their interaction both with the USSR's political aims and the Third World environment. While the Estimate takes account of the military implications for the US, NATO, and China of the USSR's military involvement in the Third World, it does not address Soviet strategic or general purpose forces as such—these are subjects of other Estimates. It should also be understood that the role and capabilities of Soviet forces are treated throughout in the context of situations short of general war.

This Estimate has a somewhat different scope and focus than the previous Estimate (NIE 11-10-71, "The Uses of Soviet Military Power in Distant Areas," dated 15 December 1971). The latter document traces and describes the evolution of the USSR's position in the Third World and describes some of the ways the Soviets have been involved militarily there in the past 15 years or so. Historical matter of this kind has, for the most part, been omitted from the present Estimate. The background material which follows concentrates on developments of the last three years or so. A principal aim here is to show how the USSR's policies toward the Third World may have been altered during this period and which underlying elements in those policies remain unchanged.

A word about the use of terms. "Third World" is taken here to refer to the non-aligned countries of the underdeveloped world; accordingly, North Korea, North Vietnam, and Cuba are largely excluded from consideration. The Soviet "military presence" in distant areas is, in turn, not limited to Third World countries; the most extensive military presence in distant areas is on ships at sea.

THE ESTIMATE

Broad Setting of Soviet Third World Policy

1. The USSR's perspective on the Third World and the Soviet place in it has changed considerably over the years. In 1955, when Moscow began seriously trying to become a factor in the Third World, it lacked advantages it now has. It had no means of applying conventional military power or maintaining a significant presence beyond the Eurasian land mass; the US and its allies had forces capable of ranging widely, and these were backed by the US superiority in nuclear strike forces. The West continued to exercise strong influence throughout the Third World; anti-Western attitudes were sharply on the increase, but the Soviets, having virtually no presence of any kind, had little chance of taking advantage of them.

2. Almost 20 years later, the scene is transformed. The USSR, its position grounded in nuclear-missile parity with the US, conducts a global policy. Largely by providing support for nationalist forces, it has gained entrée throughout the Third World; in the Middle East it has become a major influence. It now believes that as a superpower it needs to be seen and to be able to make itself felt in the Third World as everywhere else. It considers that the "equal security" which it posits as the basis for the US-Soviet strategic relationship is a function not only of the comparative levels of US and Soviet nuclear-missile forces but also of the total relationship of military forces world-wide.

3. Until the mid-1960s, the Soviets relied on military and economic aid together with various forms of political activity in building up their position in the Third World. Since then the USSR's growing capability to deploy military forces to distant areas has given

its presence in the Third World a new dimension. This capability, originally developed to support the defensive and deterrent mission of the Soviet Armed Forces, has been found to be useable also in a regional political role. The influence obtained by the USSR has, in turn, enabled it to secure from certain Third World countries access to port facilities, over-flight rights, and the like, useful to Moscow in the maintenance and improvement of the operational capabilities of these forces. In this way, the USSR's political aims in the Third World and its military presence in distant areas have become mutually supporting.

4. Soviet policy toward the Third World now aims not only at winning influence at the expense of the West, especially the US, but also at limiting the Chinese role. At the same time, Moscow still regards the Third World as an arena of ideological struggle, but the tinge of revolutionary optimism formerly found in the Soviet approach to the Third World has faded—Moscow believes that most Third World countries will not be ready for communism for some time yet. What it wants now is to bring as many of them as possible along to the point where they will customarily support the USSR on major international issues, detaching more and more of them from the West, while checking the growth of Chinese influence. To do this, the Soviets are ready to deal with virtually any government—radical or otherwise (exceptions, e.g., Israel, are usually the result of particular political circumstances rather than of ideological scruples). Local Communist Parties have in some instances served as channels of Soviet influence with Third World governments, but in many cases they have proved embarrassing to the relationship and are frequently regarded by the Russians as more hindrance than help.

5. If the last 20 years have seen a great increase in Soviet interest in the Third World, the last three or four have witnessed a subtle change in the nature of the rivalry and even in the terms of engagement between the USSR and the West in this arena. A dozen years ago it was widely believed in the USSR, and the West as well, that the Third World was about to become a main arena of the Cold War. This belief has faded as a consequence of growing realism on both sides about the intractability of the Third World's problems, of the decline in bipolarity in world affairs in general, and of changes in the structure of relations between the superpowers. It is also related to the relatively enhanced power of such states as Israel, Iran, and India which have, or are seeking, the power to play a major role in the affairs of their respective regions. These trends are reflected not only in less intense East-West competition in several regions than in previous years, but also in less inclination on the part of regional states to feel they must line up on one side or another in the superpower rivalry.

6. There are also certain new dimensions in international affairs associated with technological change—the requirements and possibilities it generates—and with population growth and related socio-economic pressures. These developments have been working to modify the priorities of the superpowers in the Third World. In the broadest sense, most major nations today show declining interest in ideology, and to some extent also in political rivalry *per se*, but a growing concern with tangible national needs like energy and food. Persian Gulf oil is the most noteworthy of these needs in the case of the US and the industrialized West; fisheries and oceanic resources in previously unexploited sea areas bordering on Third World states are a matter of growing Soviet attention. These may become significant issues in the Soviet-Western

rivalry in the Third World or they may be resolved by one or another form of *modus vivendi*. The point is that concern over matters of this kind appears quite likely to supplant, in some degree at least, the politico-ideological rivalry that prevailed over recent decades.

7. A pragmatic appreciation of the diversity of the Third World based on lengthening experience, together with shifts in Soviet priorities, has given rise to increasing differentiation in the Soviet approach. The Soviets not only do not expect as much of the Third World as a whole as they once did, but they no longer simplistically regard its various parts as a single political entity. For example, in Southeast Asia generally, Vietnam aside, commercial ties figure prominently, partly because they serve a Soviet economic need as well as a political purpose, and partly because the countries of the area have not been keen for developing other kinds of relationships with the Soviets. On the other hand, in Africa, political action—whether overt propaganda, clandestine activities, or conventional diplomacy—gets relatively heavy weight when compared with military and economic aid. The amounts and types of Soviet economic aid dispensed to particular Third World countries varies. It is military aid which has proved to be the most useful instrument for the Soviets in the Third World, especially in the Middle East. Third World countries wanting Soviet military equipment, training and advisors have received them, though not necessarily in the amounts requested. But only in Egypt did the Soviets carry their commitment to the point of providing large numbers of combat personnel to a non-Communist country.

8. Domestic factors have imposed some constraints on Soviet policy. It is good politics for the Soviet leaders to be seen to be making the USSR a force to be reckoned with

around the world. A good case can no doubt also be made on security grounds for extending the range and flexibility of Soviet military forces. But foreign aid is not a popular cause with many Soviets who count, especially in a period of economic slackness and domestic shortages. And the Soviet leaders, Brezhnev included, have not been so sure of their position that they could afford to ignore the risk of political fall-out from serious failures or overextension in Third World ventures. Moscow came closest to this kind of overcommitment in Egypt in 1970 and 1971. Moscow's anger at the ouster from Egypt in July 1972, with the loss of facilities it had found useful, was tempered by some expressions of relief at the opportunity to reduce its commitment.

Military and Economic Aid ³

9. The volume of Soviet military aid has varied over the years in response to available opportunities and the changing needs and absorptive capacity of the recipients. By and large, there has been a tendency for Moscow to focus on the Middle East and South Asia. The bulk of Soviet military aid still flows to a handful of countries—Egypt, India, Syria, and Iraq. At the same time, Moscow is constantly on the lookout for promising new clients, Peru and Chile being current cases in point.

10. During 1972, Moscow *extended* \$660 million in military aid, all of it to Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Iran, Syria, and Yemen (Aden). This figure is above the average of the 1960s, but well below those for 1970 and 1971—the extension of aid in 1970 and 1971 was abnormally high because of the extensive Soviet build-up of Egyptian air defenses and India's requests for more equipment. About \$1.7 billion, nearly one-fourth of the total of all Soviet military aid, was *drawn* or delivered in

1970 and 1971. Although deliveries in 1972 declined to about \$700 million worth of equipment from the peak level of \$925 million in 1970, they still were well above shipments averaging \$430 million annually during the 1960s.

11. Despite the expulsion order of July 1972, Soviet military equipment continues to flow to Egypt, although at a much reduced level. Overall deliveries to the Middle East for 1973 are expected to be valued at about the same amount as those for 1972, but Syria will replace Egypt as Moscow's main arms client. Larger shipments to Syria, and possibly to Iraq, should offset the decline in Soviet deliveries to Egypt. Deliveries to Syria, which began their rise in mid-1972, totalled about \$200 million in the first half of 1973. This compares with \$150 million for the entire year 1972. Most of the equipment included in these deliveries was ordered before July 1972. Shipments to Iraq, under a major 1971 accord, are expected to increase during the second half of 1973. In South Asia, India continues to be the largest Soviet arms client and is expected to receive \$100 million in Soviet military aid in 1973—about equal to the amount received in 1972.

12. The amount of economic aid committed to Third World countries also has fluctuated considerably. But recent years have seen it being dealt out on a more selective basis and purely economic considerations are being given increased weight. Thus, most aid agreements now involve repayment in fuels, raw materials, and consumer goods for which the USSR has a real need. They also have the aim of creating markets for Soviet machinery and equipment.

The Soviet Military Presence

13. Since the expulsion from Egypt in mid-1972, the Soviets have had no regular military

³ See Annex E for a detailed discussion of Soviet military and economic aid.

units stationed in the Third World. Their presence now consists of military advisors and technicians in some countries, periodic deployments of reconnaissance aircraft, and their ships at sea. The Soviets have a policy of maintaining afloat support facilities for their naval forces, looking toward increased self-sufficiency, supplementing these by access to certain port and naval facilities in the eastern Mediterranean, Gulf of Aden, Persian Gulf, the Caribbean, and eastern Atlantic. Soviet naval deployments in distant waters—measured in ship-operating days outside home waters—and the total of visits to foreign ports by Soviet naval ships have leveled off since 1970, except in the Indian Ocean where, during and after the Indo-Pakistani war in December 1971, there was some augmentation of the Soviet naval force.

14. Soviet military forces now deployed in Third World areas chiefly serve a political-military function in situations short of a major war.⁴ These forces are suitable for rendering assistance to Third World countries in certain kinds of conflicts. In some circumstances they could serve as a deterrent to Western intervention, and they are also capable of engaging in gunboat diplomacy, intelligence collection, protection of Soviet merchant, oceanographic

⁴ With the qualified exception of the Mediterranean naval force, these forces would have at best a limited military significance in the event of a major war involving the USSR and the Western Powers. The military presence in the Mediterranean Sea of course transcends Moscow's involvement in the regional situation. The Soviet Navy is there as a part of the strategic defense of the USSR: it extends the Black Sea Fleet's defense of the maritime approach to the southern flank. Through the extensive collection of targeting and other intelligence the Soviets keep close watch on the US Sixth Fleet and other NATO naval forces that are present. They also practice antiship, antiair, and antisubmarine warfare against them.

and fishing vessels, and the evacuation of Soviet personnel ashore.

15. The Soviets, however, have not developed the kinds of forces they would need to intervene militarily in Third World countries on a large scale. They do not have the infrastructure necessary to support operations against hostile shores. The Soviet naval infantry is small (about 10,000 men). It has been developed for operations on the periphery of the USSR, has a limited capability to move *en masse* across the oceans, and there is no evidence that the Soviets plan to increase its size radically. Tactical air support, crucial in any intervention against significant opposition, is lacking. Soviet tactical aircraft have limited range, cannot be refueled in mid-air, and there are serious problems connected with the overflight of countries on the Soviet periphery. The present lack of overseas air bases and aircraft carriers virtually rules out intervention ashore against significant opposition more than a few hundred miles from a land base where Soviet or friendly fighters can be called upon for support.

16. Even after the cutback in Egypt, the Soviet military presence in the Mediterranean region remains larger than in any other Third World area. In military terms, the bulk of the personnel in Egypt until July 1972, including the combat units, were serving Egyptian rather than Soviet purposes. For the Soviets the chief military effect of the expulsion was the loss of an air support capability—involving principally maritime reconnaissance and antisubmarine warfare. Soviet naval units continue to use Egyptian shore facilities, though on a more closely controlled basis, and the Soviets retain overflight and staging rights for their transport aircraft. The use of Syrian ports—Soviet warships now call routinely at Tartus and Latakia—provides a supplement to the Egyptian facilities and a hedge against

further losses of the use of these facilities.⁵ The Soviet Mediterranean naval force—composed, on the average, of 15 to 20 surface combatants, about 12 submarines, and 20 support ships—customarily operates toward the eastern part of the Mediterranean and could be concentrated at any point in that area should the Soviets wish to interpose themselves between the shores of a friendly country and any naval force menacing it. In past years, the force participated in joint exercises with Arab navies and, in the spring and summer of 1973, it helped in transferring Moroccan ground force equipment and troops to Syria.

17. The Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean is now continuous and has grown to about 15 ships of which less than half are combatants.⁶ The port and airfield facilities now being worked on by the Soviets in Somalia, and their naval communications facility there could be used to provide space support, reconnaissance, logistics, and communications for the Indian Ocean force. The Soviets also call intermittently at Iraq's Persian Gulf port at Umm Qasr—which they are helping the Iraqis to develop—and at Aden in South Yemen. Small numbers of Soviet ships are found regularly in the Caribbean and West African waters; in the latter area, Soviet units have been used for a show of force—against the government of Ghana in 1969, and in support of the government of Guinea since 1970. West African logistic support has been useful, but not essential, to Soviet ships en route to and from the Indian

⁵ As many as three An-12 transport aircraft, which probably have electronic warfare capabilities, arrived in Syria during the fall of 1972. Such aircraft could support contingency reconnaissance efforts against Israel or the US Sixth Fleet.

⁶ Total includes hydrographic and space event support ships, but excludes about 10 units engaged in harbor clearing in Bangladesh.

Ocean. During the past three years, roughly one-third of these ships have stopped in West African ports.

18. Certain Soviet forces can be deployed overseas to augment the Soviet military presence in the Third World:

—In general, the navy is the most flexible and ready of these forces, and the Soviets have moved it on short notice—sometimes with naval infantry aboard—to trouble spots (e.g., in the Indian Ocean during the Indo-Pakistani war). The Soviets could increase considerably the number of combatants deployed in certain distant areas. The number would depend upon many variables, including the destination, purpose, and desired length of the deployment, requirements to maintain homeland defenses, and the international political climate.

—The Soviet logistic system is capable of supporting normal levels of activity even by the augmented forces, but it would impose limitations in the event of a sustained high level of activity or combat operations. Water, provisions and, in some instances, fuel are available to Soviet combatants in many foreign ports, but a logistic system dependent upon such ports could be disrupted (or enhanced according to the whims of local leaders, the purpose of the Soviet operation, and the general international situation).

—The Soviets would have little difficulty in moving air defense equipment and systems to most Third World areas. As they continue to expand their air and sea transport, and improve their tactical air, air defense, and naval forces, they will be better equipped to deploy combatant forces in certain distant areas and to support them. However, in most cases they would have to be prepared to man the

systems themselves if they were to be fully effective.

—In cases of little or no opposition, landings of naval infantry or deployments of airborne units could, of course, be made but the use of regular ground forces would present more difficult logistic problems.

* * * * *

19. In sum, recent years have seen a trend toward greater realism and differentiation in Soviet policies toward the Third World. The Soviets have been devoting relatively less attention to some areas. This is especially true of Africa and Southeast Asia (Indochina apart). It is not so in the case of the Middle East, nor in the case of the Indian subcontinent. In the Middle East, the USSR's increased activity in some countries, e.g., Syria and Iraq—has helped it to offset the sharp setback it suffered in Egypt. The Soviets also have been very active in Somalia, Yemen (Aden), and Guinea. And, as a consequence of its support for the winning side in the India-Pakistan war, Moscow has now become the major external influence in India. Beyond these areas, the USSR's position in the Third World has not changed appreciably, nor has its military presence grown significantly in size or scope. Measured against the dramatic growth from the middle to the late 1960s, when the Soviets were greatly increasing or establishing a military presence for the first time in the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, and Caribbean, their presence in many areas has stabilized or leveled off. This has been due in part to the lack of promising new openings in the Third World and to operational constraints affecting Soviet deployments. It has undoubtedly also been due to the fact that Moscow has in recent years been devoting greater attention and energy to issues affecting its posture toward the West and China.

20. How much this consideration has affected Soviet policies in the Third World is the subject of considerable debate within the Intelligence Community. No one denies that a détente policy, or the need to cope with the China problem in its various ramifications, is having an impact on other Soviet policy calculations. Neither does anyone believe that these factors will lead the USSR radically to constrict its role in the Third World. Détente does not mean an end to Soviet competition with the West, but rather an adaptation of the rules of engagement. The fact that the Intelligence Community finds so large a measure of agreement on the judgments of this Estimate should not disguise the fact that different agencies and analysts assign differing degrees of importance to détente and the China problem in terms of the extent of their influences on Soviet decisions, past and ongoing, about how active and forward a policy in the Third World the USSR should pursue, and how much risk to accept. In general, the DIA, Army, Navy, and Air Force would give less weight to the constraining factors than the CIA, State/INR, NSA, and Treasury. By the same token, the former are inclined to assign to the Soviets greater willingness to press hard and to run risks.

21. Despite the changes of the last few years, Moscow's methods of operation and the premises of its policies remain unaltered. The Soviets continue to believe that military assistance is a promising means—particularly in the case of countries which think themselves externally threatened—of gaining access to, and influence on, Third World countries. In return for military aid, the Soviets hope in many cases to gain access to shore facilities for the support of their naval and air operations. And where regional conflicts have created openings and the Soviets have seen the opportunity to deploy naval forces in support of political ends with small risk of military engagement, they have done so—off Guinea,

and more importantly, in the Indian Ocean during the conflict over Bangladesh. Only in rare circumstances, however, has Moscow been willing to venture direct military involvement on the territory of a Third World country and there are few, if any, Third World countries which would be willing to have the Soviets present in this way except *in extremis*. But the stimulus of ideological, and even more of great power rivalry remains and the USSR is determined to play to the full its role as one of the world's two global powers. Its forces capable of operating in the Third World will continue to grow (the first Soviet aircraft carrier will enter service about 1975) and, as the USSR continues to make its influence felt everywhere, a sharpening competition for energy and food resources is likely to introduce a new element into the rivalry.

Aims and Opportunities in Particular Regions

The Mediterranean and Middle East

22. The USSR has more at stake in the Middle East than in any other Third World area. Besides protecting its position as a major player on the scene, it will be looking for opportunities to gain leverage in a region where the West has vital economic interests, oil interests in particular. The Soviets will also seek to improve the operational capabilities of their Mediterranean naval force—though its overall size will not necessarily grow appreciably—and to achieve a capability for operating more extensively in the western Mediterranean.

23. Egypt will continue to bulk large in Soviet Middle Eastern policy. It remains a major voice in Arab councils and the focal point of the Arab conflict with Israel, and it occupies a key geographical position vis-à-vis

the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea. For their part, the Egyptians, even after the falling-out last year, continue to rely on the Russians for diplomatic support, and military and economic aid. The Soviets, as well as the Egyptians, will want to prevent a further deterioration in their relationship, and this will require a continuing flow of economic and military assistance.

24. But with Nasser dead, and pan-Arabism a waning force, Egypt's role as a political bridgehead in the Middle East has diminished. The Soviets will try to widen their political base in the Middle East. They probably believe that, on the whole, they can make most headway by cultivating other radical Arab states, stressing the development of stronger bilateral relations with them, and taking into account particular ambitions and animosities. But, while this is where the Soviets see the most promise at present, their interests in the area are broad; they will also be trying—more slowly and more quietly—to bring along their relations with states of all kinds, whether they are anti-Western or pro-Western, Arab or non-Arab.

25. Moscow is not likely to have an easy time in winning the cooperation of the North African states in its efforts to develop its military presence in the western Mediterranean. The Soviets have lately made some progress in their relations with Morocco, where King Hassan has shown interest in expanding economic ties with the Russians and in obtaining more of their military equipment, evidently thinking he can strengthen his internal position by such a policy. But the Maghreb remains generally inhospitable to Soviet influence; this is at least as true of the "radical" states as of the others: Algeria, while continuing to receive substantial amounts of aid from the Soviets, has managed to keep them

at arm's length, while Qadhafi's Libya remains deeply hostile to Soviet Communism.

26. The Arab-Israeli conflict has long been a useful source of leverage for the Soviets and still is, but—with the hardening of Israel's position and mounting Arab frustration—it contains risks for the Soviets and no longer holds out the kind of political rewards it once offered them. A new Arab-Israeli war would almost certainly go against their clients unless the Soviets became involved in a major way. Such intervention being unlikely, they would stand to be severely embarrassed. Moreover, as Communist theorists in Moscow see it, the Arab states' preoccupation with the issue and the attendant heavy military costs delay the kind of internal political, economic, and social changes which they want to see occur. Moscow must nonetheless continue to supply its Arab clients with arms, at least to the extent that they will not appear to be wide open to Israeli attack. Yet, the USSR needs to control the amounts and types of arms supplied for fear that its Arab clients will miscalculate their strength and get themselves and the Russians in trouble.

27. Because of these concerns, the Russians would like to reduce the risk of renewed Arab-Israeli conflict. They might be attracted to an interim agreement as a way of accomplishing this; the appeal of such an agreement would be the greater if it promised the reopening of the Suez Canal, since this would enable the Soviets to link up their Mediterranean and Indian Ocean naval operations. But they would not expend much of their political capital with their Arab friends to bring about such a result. In any case, they would insist on a major voice in any negotiations and would guard against an outcome which would undercut their influence with the Arabs. If

they concluded that such circumstances were unobtainable, they would probably be prepared to live with the present stalemate, hoping that it could be kept from deteriorating into a new war.

Red Sea and Persian Gulf Areas

28. Soviet interests in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf have both a Middle East and an Indian Ocean aspect:

- In both areas, the USSR's military activities buttress its relations with radical states—South Yemen (Aden), Iraq, and Somalia; and, in return for their military assistance, the Soviets are being given access to shore facilities.
- The closure of the Suez Canal handicaps Soviet operations in the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean area generally. Nevertheless, they keep ships in these areas on a regular basis and they will see value in continuing to do so because this will enable them to show the flag, while providing additional operational experience and training for their naval forces.
- The more active role the Soviets play in both areas, the more they run the risk of becoming unprofitably embroiled in regional politics. A more conspicuous military presence on their part could create alarm in Iran and many Arab states—especially where the Persian Gulf is concerned—and could become politically counter-productive for the Russians. The Soviet position will also be complicated by divisions among Arab revolutionary groups seeking Moscow's aid, lack of control over such groups, and by rivalry with China.

—Nonetheless, the Russians clearly aim at obtaining wider influence in these areas. The Soviets must reckon that the chances are fairly good that radical Arab nationalism will in due course gain ground in the Arabian peninsula and among the mini-states of the Persian Gulf, creating situations they will want to be in a position to influence. And Moscow's interest in the area cannot help but be whetted by the knowledge that Western Europe, Japan, and the US have an increasingly vital stake in its oil resources.

*The Soviets and Middle Eastern Oil*⁷

29. The USSR's political position in the Middle East and its substantial military presence confer influence which might enable Moscow to play on US, West European, and Japanese concerns about oil supplies. The Soviets will also remain in a position to lend political and propaganda support to the Arab oil-producing states if they should undertake moves to limit or stop oil production and they would expect their military presence in the area to be a deterrent to any Western action to secure oil by military means. There are, however, distinct limits on the role which the Soviets can play as regards oil operations in the Middle East. They have fairly close ties with only one major oil exporter, Iraq, and the governments of the Middle East now in power (or likely to gain power) would resist any Soviet effort to acquire a measure of control over the production and distribution of their oil. In any case, the Soviets would recognize that a serious attempt to bring pres-

⁷ These conclusions are drawn from NIAM 3-73, "International Petroleum Prospects," dated 11 May 1973, CONFIDENTIAL, especially paragraphs 35-46 of that publication.

sure on the West by exploiting its oil needs or actually to interfere with the oil supply would jeopardize the entire structure of East-West relations.⁸

South and Southeast Asia

30. If and when the Suez Canal is reopened, the transit distance for Soviet naval ships moving between Western and Eastern Fleet areas will be greatly shortened and the use of the Indian Ocean for this purpose will increase. The reopening would also enable the Soviets to maintain an increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean and support a somewhat higher level of operational activity. This may happen even if the Canal remains closed. But, two contingencies in particular might very well lead to a larger Soviet military presence—a serious threat to India, or a substantial growth in the US military presence in the

⁸ The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that this paragraph understates the capability and desire of the Soviet Union to play a critical role in Middle Eastern oil matters. He feels that this understatement is largely due to the focus of the paper on the most visible manifestation of Soviet presence—the military. The capability of the Soviet Union to project military forces into the region has a latent psychological impact on regional decision-makers which probably far surpasses the influence of military presence *per se*. In addition, the Soviet Union's efforts to expand its presence and influence through the subtle techniques of subversion, clandestine support to radical elements, and aid programs—both economic and military—are more likely to come to fruition in the Middle Eastern region than is the blatant projection of military power. The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, and the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, believe that there is greater uncertainty than the text suggests about whether groups likely to gain power in Middle Eastern states could effectively resist Soviet efforts to acquire some measure of control over their oil operations.

Indian Ocean area. Over time the level of Soviet operations there may also increase as a counter to growing Chinese military capabilities. Even in the nearer term, many aspects of Soviet behavior in the area are likely, in fact, to be as much an outgrowth of Soviet rivalry with China as with the US.

31. In South Asia, India will remain the focal point of Soviet policy, partly because of its value as a counterweight to China. In the aftermath of the war over Bangladesh, the Soviets are more firmly established in India than ever before. Increasing quantities of military equipment are being provided with emphasis now on assistance to the Indian Navy, and the contacts between the military services of the two countries have been expanded. In addition, the Russians have, in the past, probed India's readiness to provide facilities for the use of Soviet naval forces and are likely to do so again. But in foreseeable circumstances, the Soviets will not be willing to take on the burden of supporting India's economy much beyond the present level. They will prefer not to link themselves so closely to the Indians politically that they entirely lose their freedom of maneuver vis-à-vis other area states, e.g., Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and even Pakistan. On the Indian side, there is no intention of falling into a client status. Indian policy places high priority on Soviet support and their interests are in many ways parallel—particularly regarding China—but the Indians aim at national self-reliance, and to the extent that Indian fears of China and Pakistan are diminished, Soviet leverage is diminished. They will be unwilling to concede a major military role in the Indian Ocean area to any outside power, the USSR or the US, and providing facilities to the Russians for the support of military operations would go against this policy. Thus, there are limits

on how far Soviet-Indian intimacy will develop.

32. Except for its concern to preserve its freedom of passage through the Malacca Strait, and its commercial ties with Malaysia and Singapore, the USSR's interests in Southeast Asia have been centered on Indochina. In dealing with the situation growing out of the ceasefire in Vietnam, the Soviets are likely to be less concerned with the US' residual role there than with preventing China from establishing any kind of hegemony in Hanoi or elsewhere in Indochina. The intensified Sino-Soviet contest for influence will inevitably spill over into the other Southeast Asian states as well. Moscow will regard its naval units in the area as a means of strengthening its hand in this contest for influence.

33. The Soviets want to play a larger role along the entire rim of Asia. One device for achieving this objective is the Asian collective security system which they continue to advocate. They evidently do not intend, however, for this system to have an important military dimension. It would entail pledges by the participants to respect one another's sovereignty, to forego the use of force, and the like. None of the Asian states are showing enthusiasm for letting the USSR intrude in their security arrangements even to this extent. They would care still less for anything smacking of a military alliance.

34. In Asia, especially, the presence of a hostile China has had a dampening effect on Moscow's inclination to encourage the appearance of radical or Communist regimes, or to welcome regional conflicts as opportunities for the extension of Soviet influence. The gradual transformation of the USSR into something of a *status quo* power in Asia has, in turn, tended to lower the level of US-Soviet competition in the area.

*Latin America*⁹

35. Latin American countries looking for arms, and for alternatives to the US as supplier, will find the Russians ready to deal. Where military supply relationships are established there will be more Soviet military delegations coming and going. As in other Third World areas, Soviet naval units may make occasional appearances on flag-showing port visits, for example, in Chile or Peru. Naval activities of this kind would be useful to the Soviets much more for their demonstrative effects than for any military significance, given the overwhelming US superiority in this area. In any event, the Soviets would face operational problems in significantly enlarging their naval presence in Latin American waters and would probably also question whether the benefits to be derived were worth provoking the US and arousing alarm in Latin America itself.

36. The USSR's present assessment of trends in Latin America also argues for a gradualist approach, one which aims more at nursing along anti-American nationalism than at promoting revolutionary upheaval. The Soviets have had some success in keeping the Cubans lined up behind this gradualist approach partly, no doubt, because the Cubans see advantages in it. The survival of the Allende government in Chile would give the Russians added confidence in the correctness of their approach. Nonetheless, until the Soviets are

⁹ Soviet activity in the Caribbean and Latin America is, of course, primarily based on Cuba. Cuba provides communications, naval and air facilities for the Soviets. There has been a gradual increase in the use of these facilities in recent years, but the Soviet military presence in the area remains small and intermittent. These matters are discussed in the Annexes. There is also discussion in Annex C of the question of the basing of Soviet ballistic missile submarines in Cuba, a subject which will, in addition, be treated in the forthcoming NIE 11-8-73, "Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Attack."

convinced that the Allende government, or something like it, can last, they will not want to tie themselves fully to its support or to commit substantial economic resources to it. They could in fact see more promise in trying to cultivate military-nationalist governments of the Peruvian type rather than hybrid and unpredictable left-Marxist regimes of the Chilean kind.

Africa

37. The USSR's most extensive military involvement in sub-Saharan Africa is in countries on the opposite coasts, Guinea and Somalia. The pattern is familiar: in return for economic aid and military assistance in one form or another, the Soviets have arrangements which facilitate their naval operations, in the Atlantic in one case, the Indian Ocean in the other. Elsewhere in Africa, the Soviets see the Chinese fairly busy in developing relations with governments and liberation movements, and Moscow wants to check the spread of their influence. But the Russians do not now see any great promise in pursuing a more active policy, and they are put off by the instability and unpredictability of African governments. Altogether, the Soviet stake in Africa is relatively small, and no major Soviet push seems likely. Nevertheless, the USSR will probably continue willing, as occasion offers, to respond to requests for help from African governments, as during the Nigerian civil war, or from liberation movements, as they are now doing in the case of insurgent organizations operating against Portuguese African territories and Rhodesia.

Future Trends: Variables and Constraints

38. In the contest for influence over the next few years, in much of the Third World the Soviets will have one eye on the US and one eye on the Chinese. (They tend to attribute to the Chinese an exaggerated capacity

for doing damage to their interests.) They will need to weigh whether the pursuit of particular objectives or the seizing of particular opportunities will give them a useful advantage in the three-sided rivalry. They will also need to ask themselves whether the resources needed for any particular effort in the Third World might be better spent on other undertakings, domestic and foreign. Soviet political and military aims in Third World areas, though often complementary, are not always entirely compatible. Over a period of time, the deployment of additional forces will be determined by budgetary constraints, naval and air building trends, and by overall political and strategic considerations at least as much as by purely regional factors and opportunities in the Third World (e.g., the availability of facilities). On this basis, primary emphasis will continue to be accorded to strategic nuclear forces and to general purpose forces on the USSR's two principal fronts on the Eurasian continent. Present trends in the development and deployment of Soviet forces do not point to an alteration of these priorities. This being so, the USSR's ability to conduct military operations in distant areas—against significant opposition—will remain severely limited for some time to come.

39. Nevertheless, improvements are being made in Soviet forces which will give them an increased capability to operate in distant areas:

- The Soviet Navy will be able gradually to extend the range of its operations and will probably in time show itself in new waters, the South Pacific, for example.
- The aircraft carrier under construction will be able to perform a variety of tasks and could make a significant contribution to Soviet naval operations in Third World areas. This will not necessarily be its primary application, however. There is, as

yet, no firm evidence on how the Soviets intend to use this ship.¹⁰

- Other naval construction under way will bring into service additional Kara-, Kresta-, and Krivak-class units which could operate in distant areas as part of a task group. These ships are larger and better armed than other ships in their classes and have good seakeeping qualities and endurance.
- Besides deploying and developing new forces, the Soviets will be working to solve their support and supply problems: by trying to obtain the use of additional shore facilities and, also, so as not to be too dependent on the whims of others, by improving their means of afloat support.
- As they continue to expand their air and sea transport, and as they make improvements to their tactical air, air defense, and naval forces, the Soviets will be better equipped to deploy combatant forces in certain distant areas and to support them. This capability will be enhanced if they gain greater access to naval and air facilities in Third World countries.

40. Many Third World countries will continue to look to the Soviets for support, particularly in the form of military aid. Soviet opportunities will be greatest in those countries which feel threatened by regional adversaries, especially when the latter are US friends or allies. But because of political instability in the Third World and their own missteps, the Soviets will have their "downs" as well as "ups." They will have the problem of squaring their interests—the interests of a superpower maneuvering in complex ways on a global scale—with the more parochial in-

¹⁰The capabilities of the carrier are discussed in Annex A.

terests of Third World client states. Most Third World leaders understand what Soviet priorities are. But most of them are proud, sensitive, or simply willful, and some of them will react angrily against the Russians when the incompatibility of interests manifests itself.

41. Nowhere in the Third World are the Russians at present so firmly entrenched that they can be sure that leaders who ask for advisors or allow them to use facilities might not at some point abruptly invite them to leave. The USSR's clients will frequently expect more support than Moscow will be willing to give. The Soviets are also bound to get caught from time to time in the crossfire of conflicting interests within or between Third World countries. For all of these reasons, they will be vulnerable to the kinds of reverses they have suffered in Indonesia, Sudan, and Egypt.

42. Moscow's approach will depend to some degree on whether the Soviet leadership is in a confident mood and internally cohesive. The composition of the ruling group in Moscow is very likely to undergo extensive change in the next few years. It makes some difference for Soviet policy—in the Third World and elsewhere—whether it is in the hands of a mercurial leader like Khrushchev or is being conducted according to the less impulsive methods of a Brezhnev. A leadership more inclined to activism in the Third World could come to power. But even such a leadership would find it difficult to ignore what the present leadership has come to accept—that, where critical Soviet interests are not involved, an attenuation of friction with the West can serve the USSR's internal economic needs and important foreign policy objectives.

The United States-Soviet Interaction

43. It is now Soviet dogma that the "correlation of international forces" has shifted in the USSR's favor. This appraisal is useful to

the Soviets because it provides an ideological justification for détente, expresses genuine Soviet optimism about its world position relative to that of the US, and camouflages weaknesses in the USSR's domestic and international positions. Both its strengths and weaknesses have helped to move Moscow toward a policy which broadens the area of cooperation and interdependence between itself and the US. Obviously, this course is not irreversible, yet there seem to be strong impulses in the Soviet political process making for its continuation.

44. In pursuing its policies toward various Third World areas, Moscow will exercise some care about encroaching on US interests in Third World areas. This will necessarily be a matter of how the Soviets perceive those interests and of how the US represents its readiness to protect them. The Soviets certainly would be inclined to press their objectives harder in situations in which they did not expect to encounter serious US resistance.

—In the *Caribbean*—barring significant change in the Soviet-Cuban or in the US-Cuban relationship—the gradual increase of the Soviet military presence of recent years is likely to continue. But the Soviets would almost certainly test US reactions before making a substantial increase in their military presence. In the rest of *Latin America*, they will also be sensitive to US reactions, but the outlook is for some increase in military supply relationships with selected countries and naval visits to show the flag.

—The Soviets do not want a confrontation with the US in the *Middle East*. However, they no doubt believe that the US does not want one either, and they have their own stake in the area as well as a certain deterrent capability, in the form of their Mediterranean naval force. Hence, in a crisis situation, Moscow's behavior would

be affected both by US readiness to act in that particular situation and by broader calculations concerning the general state of US-Soviet relations.

—The increased anxiety lately expressed in the US about Soviet intentions in the *Persian Gulf* in the light of the energy crisis could lead the Soviets to conclude that there is more leverage to be had from a stronger position in the area than they had previously supposed. They will, in any case, continue efforts to expand their influence in this area seeking, for example, to bind Iraq closer to their policies, and looking for openings in the lesser Gulf states. Yet any Soviet push in the Persian Gulf which appeared to threaten Western access to oil would carry a high price tag in terms of Soviet relations with the US as well as with other industrialized states and with the local powers. These considerations are likely to inhibit conspicuous enlargement of the Soviet *military* presence in the Gulf.¹¹

45. It may be that there will be in certain times and places a congruence of Soviet and US interests, in some cases because of Soviet apprehension about the growth of Chinese influence. The USSR, for example, certainly

¹¹ The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that, even in a period of relaxed Soviet-Western relations, the Soviet Union will continue to exploit every feasible low-risk opportunity to attain its long-term strategic goals in the Persian Gulf area. Fundamental to these goals is the ability to influence, control, deny, or disrupt Western and Japanese access to energy resources of the Gulf.

Utilizing the techniques of subversion, bribery, and clandestine support to radical elements, the Soviet Union will continue to pursue these goals without the conspicuous enlargement of their military presence in the Gulf. The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that the current estimate understates the Soviet threat to Western interests in the Gulf region by concentrating on presence or absence of military force.

believes, like the US, that instability and conflict on the Indian subcontinent is undesirable. It is difficult, however, to see this kind of congruence of objectives becoming either widespread or lasting and it certainly will not automatically transfer from one area to another. And even where some congruence may exist the Soviets are not likely to forego opportunities to obtain advantage over the US in particular situations, as during the most recent Indo-Pakistani war. There is as yet also little reason to suppose that the Soviets are prepared to limit their options by entering formal agreements with the US—as distinct from occasionally exercising tacit restraint mutually with the US—on arms control or the limitation of naval deployments in Third World areas, though they have suggested the latter in broad and ambiguous terms. And US efforts to improve its own military capabilities in certain Third World regions may produce a competitive Soviet response.

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46. The USSR's conduct in coming years is most apt to be characterized by opportunism tempered by prudence and an inclination to discriminate between kinds of opportunities. Its military forces will be politically useful simply as a symbol of Soviet power. They can be used for gunboat diplomacy in some instances with little risk. Moscow may also expect that where its military presence is substantial, as in the Mediterranean, US military action will be inhibited. In pursuing immediate advantages, it could miscalculate the risks. Moreover, the Soviets could in time conclude that because of a deep and definitive change in the "correlation of forces" between the US and USSR, there will be less risk for them than now in direct military engagement in certain situations. But unless this comes about, Moscow will not want to use its forces in ways which would carry high risk of actual military encounter over matters vital to the US.

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